DCCUMENT RESUME

ED 153 672 JC 780 221

AUTHOR Weiner, Stephen S.
TITLE Teaching and the Collegiate Idea.
PUB DATE 6 Apr 78
NOTE 12p.; Speech given before the Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges (Sacramento, California, April 6, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Attitudes; *College Faculty; *College Role; Communication Problems; Community Colleges; Effective Teaching; *Instructional Improvement; *Junior Colleges; State Boards of Education; *Teaching
IDENTIFIERS *California

ABSTRACT

Over the past three decades administrators of the California community college system have focused attention on system growth and expansion, changes in student body characteristics, and funding support problems while ignoring the system's principal function, teaching. In order to improve understanding of the teaching function and to elevate respect for teaching, there must be better means for faculty to communicate their experiences, problems, and ideas to their colleagues, the policy makers, and the public. New communications methods might involve having teachers commit their perceptions to paper, perhaps with financial awards as incentives, these papers to be circulated in a statewide journal which would establish a forum for all 104 colleges in the system. The best essays could be disseminated among the public. Further, faculty members should be encouraged to visit other campuses to promote intercampus information exchange and cooperation. On the state level, an independent inquiry into teaching might be initiated covering faculty background and professional goals as well as faculty views on teaching and how it can be improved. In addition, policy makers, such as members of the state Board of Governors, should actively explore teaching concerns through on-campus visits to discover the various faculty voices within the system. (TE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED153672

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Stephen S. Weiner

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Teaching and the Collegiate Idea

Remarks by Stephen S. Weiner, Vice-Chairman, Board of Governors, California Community Colleges, before the Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges, April 6, 1978

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Two and a half years ago, shortly after my appointment to the Board of Governors, I was invited to address a statewide meeting being convened by a community college organization. The person who tendered the invitation said that they wanted my opinions about community college education. I regretfully declined the invitation on the grounds that I should not have any opinions until I had some knowledge. Little did I understand that a major function of Board members is to form and announce opinions based upon little or no knowledge. During the past 30 months I have begun my education, mostly through visits to a dozen campuses, reading what I could get my hands on, and listening at meetings such as this one.

You are here to discuss "the planning of quality education." First, I am struck by the work "planning" because there is so little of it in the community colleges, at least if we think of planning in a multi-year sense. No one planned for the gigantic increase in older, part-time students in the community colleges of California. No one planned for the rapid growth of part-time faculty. Yet these are among the major developments of the past decade. Indeed, one of the great strengths of the community colleges may be that "planning" is not necessary. The academic traditions of the community colleges (or more accurately the lack of them), the commitment to admit all those over 18, and a financial structure that rewards increased enrollment and insures reliance, in part, upon a local tax base: these are all factors that foster responsiveness by the colleges and help to minimize the role of planning (other than to provide the physical sites where instruction occurs).

JC 780 221

It might be a more noble world if our only responsibility in discussing "quality education" was to debate educational philosophy. But, in public higher education, as in so many spheres of life, our philosophy is often a servant to the forces of demography, economics, and politics. So let us dwell on these latter, dismal subjects for a moment. The growth of the community colleges has been astounding. In 1947 there were 107,000 students enrolled in 45 public two-year colleges in California. In 1960 enrollment had jumped to 340,000 in 66 colleges. And now our enrollment ranges near 1,300,000 in 104 colleges. Think of it--in the last 18 years an increase of almost 1,000,000 in enrollment and the addition of 38 campuses plus hundreds of off-campus centers. In the past quarter century community college ADA in this state has grown by a factor of seven: 94,000 in 1950-51, 769,000 in 1975-76. Equally astounding is the growth of support from the taxpayers. In 1965-66 California community college districts spent $180 million in "current expenditures" of which 1/3 came from the state treasury. In 1975-76, districts spent $957 million and of that one half, $491 million, came from the state. In one decade, state expenditures (neglecting aid for capital construction) rose from $61 million to $491 million! These facts make it difficult for me to accept complaints that state government has been miserly in its treatment of the community colleges.

In the post-World War II period the colleges have emerged from control from K-12 districts toward governance by their own separate boards and, 10 years ago, the addition of a separate state Board of Governors for the colleges. By and large, it has been a happy period of growth. Individual careers leapt forward, public respect and support multiplied, magnificent campuses were built, a sense of efficacy was shared by the large bulk of trustees, administrators, faculty and students.

But the demographic tide has changed. According to best estimates, a much decelerated growth will continue for about five years to be followed by stable enrollments until the early 1990's. Whatever enrollment growth can be reasonably expected must rely almost entirely upon the expanding adult market, students over the age of 25. Most of these are part-time students, often with no clear educational objectives or objectives that do not fit neatly into existing curricula and degree structures. Perhaps others can foresee clearly the consequences of the growing impact of electronic media upon the colleges; increased political power on the part of older citizens and the consequent pressure against forced retirements; the changing nature of the labor market; collective bargaining in the colleges; the competition for older students by 4 year institutions and private, proprietary schools. My crystal ball is clouded but certainly the days of easy, dependable enrollment growth are over for much of the balance of the century.

That might not be a cause for alarm so long as financial support could continue to grow, permitting us to spend more on the education of stable enrollment. But there, too, the signs are foreboding. We have seen how quickly a financial cap can be imposed by the state; we have seen a statewide community college bond issue go down to defeat. We now witness the questioning of the value of a college degree; and the growth of federal aid to create jobs, even if menial ones, rather than to support colleges; and the qualification of an initiative measure for the June ballot that would literally decapitate the community colleges along with other government functions that depend upon the property tax. The Legislature and the Governor have already mortgaged much of their fiscal capacity to support new programs in the next five years in the name of property tax relief. The Capital Outlay Fund for Public Higher Education is drying up at the same time that the maintenance needs of 104 campuses

increases and as the competitive pressure for those funds from the University and the State Universities and Colleges mounts. And no one seems to have much stomach either for a new state wide bond issue or local bond issues.

At the same time, in a system of colleges dedicated to egalitarianism, there is mounting evidence that community "outreach," continuing education, community education and all of the other labels for tapping the market for adult students does not necessarily mean a growing emphasis upon service to poor populations or minority communities. Those who are already educated are becoming better educated. The education gap between rich and poor is growing in California.

Where will we secure the funds to physically maintain our colleges, to extend our commitment to poor and minority students, to provide better salaries and better working and teaching conditions? It is conceivable that before the end of the next decade we may well see some of our more affluent students paying at least 10% of the cost of their instruction, and perhaps more. Let me add that if tuition does come, then we had best make sure that it comes in a form that does not further close college doors to the poor and that the proceeds from such fees are used in the colleges and not to build more highways and state office buildings.

But the fiscal and political problems of the community colleges, while most visible to members of the press, public and Legislature, may not be the most vexing aspects of our recently enlarged educational enterprise. The central dilemma might be posed as follows: "Is there any college left in the community college?" As is often the case with such questions, we are immediately plunged into uncertainties about language and meaning. My dictionary gives

eight distinct meanings for the word "college." One is "a school of higher learning that grants the bachelor's degree in liberal arts or science or both." By this definition, there was never any "college" in "community college." A second definition is "the building or buildings occupied by any such school." According to those college presidents with an edifice complex, this definition provides reassurance that there will always be a "college" in "community college." I favor the following definition: "A company or assemblage; especially a body of persons having a common purpose or common duties," especially if it is coupled with "A self governing society of scholars for study or instruction." Implicit in these latter definitions is the notion of academic standards and curriculum upheld by that "assemblage with common duties" and the notion of obligations owed to one another by the members of the college community. What has the emphasis upon growth, the extension of the 13th and 14th grade to the academically unprepared, and the growing ranks of the part-time and sometimes casual student meant for the idea of a college?

First, let us hear testimony from Professor Arthur Cohen of UCLA, one of the few scholars in the University to pay serious attention to the community college:

> By definition a curriculum leads a person from one measured point of knowledge, skill, attitude, or ability to another. Students and teachers take definite roles within it. It has a body of content, defined objectives, measured entry and exit points. (The fact that many curriculums fail to include all those elements does not change the definition.)
>
> A set of presentations is something else. It need not have measured entry (anyone can attend) or measured exit. The presentors need not assess its effects on the viewers. It can be sent out in any form, viewed by anyone. It promises nothing.
>
> Failure to understand the difference between courses and curriculum on the one hand and presentations that may or may not have an effect on the viewer leads to pathetic confusions. Learning in the graded courses remains unmeasured. Teaching is defined as presenting information rather than as a sequence of events organized deliberately to cause learning. We ask the students if they enjoyed the experience rather than determining how they have changed. And we assign course numbers, course descriptions, and other accoutrements to the presentations and do surveys asking if the viewers enjoyed the experience.

The real difference between college as a place of learning and community education as a concept is not between serving youth and serving adults, not between credit and non-credit courses, not between academic and vocational programs, not between the serious and the recreational. It is between curriculum and presentations...People must learn in college, or what's it for? All the talk of equalizing socie and uplifting community comes to that. More learning equals a better col ; less learning a poorer college; no learning, no college.

At the risk of bringing coals to Newcastle, let me now cite a portion of the report of your own Conference on Academic Standards:

A number of pressures seem to have caused a depression in academic standards. Perhaps the greatest pressure on academic standards in the California community colleges has been the "growth ethic" adopted l most institutions during the preceding decade. Though the economy as a whole has been growth-oriented since the early 1950s, the California community colleges have only recently adopted aggressive student recruitment policies. Successful in their objectives, the new recruiting techniques have made a college education available to many who would previously not have attempted it. But recruitment has also drawn increased numbers of people who have little of the motivation or skill necessary for success in college. The drive for increased ADA or WSCH has pressured faculty to show these students success so that they will enroll in even more classes. Remedial programs notwithstanding, students unprepared for college work who are enticed into a program and shown"success" without real scholastic achievement lower the standard once understood as collegiate.

This distinction between curriculum and presentations, this summons to uphold academic standards, does not digest easily in the context of the community college. Is this nothing more than a thinly veiled effort to impose the inappropriate standards of the University, to deny a decent chance to those who have already been failed in the elementary and secondary schools? The risks in discussing academic standards are real and they can not be swept under the rug. However, we ignore the distinction between a college and the recreation and parks department, the distinction between college and occupational training programs, the distinction between the college and courses by newspaper, at our own risk.

Wherever your own philosophic inclination leads you, however, there is no escaping the centrality of teaching in the collegiate life. And, I strongly suspect that those students who have been poorly served in their prior schooling experiences most desperately need the effort, the dedication, the discipline of talented and energetic teachers. Yet what does one find on the community college campus today? I have not performed an exhaustive study in the past two years but I have visited more than a dozen colleges from Quincy in the north to San Diego in the south. I find dispirited teachers, I find anxious teachers, I find teachers who teach too much at the expense of teaching well. And I find students who know the difference between good teaching and the devalued currency that they sometimes encounter in the classroom. This should not be read as a general indictment of community college teaching. It should be seen as a warning signal that the conditions for good teaching can not be assumed to be ever present.

The demographic, economic, political and institutional forces are real. I see no slackening of continuing education, part-time education and community outreach. Nor, perhaps, should there be. But, somewhere in these enveloping trends there must be a genuine concern for teaching. Somewhere, somehow we must restore respect for the act of teaching. Without that respect all of our reforms are of no avail. Without that respect, the conflict that now characterizes the relations among state officials, local trustees, administrators, faculty and students will ultimately rip our colleges apart and leave 104 sterile monuments to an experiment that did not succeed.

The task may well be equivalent to bailing out the Pacific Ocean with a tin cup, but bail we must and as fast as we can. The bulwark in a drive to re-examine academic standards and requisites for quality teaching admidst the fiscal and demographic realities of the community colleges must be the faculty itself. Others must join the effort, but only the faculty can lead it. As we

debate new legislation concerning part-time teachers, collective bargaining, and the 50% law, we had best realize that we ought to be concerned with the idea of the college and the possibility of teaching in those colleges.

We shall not resolve our teaching dilemma from Sacramento but those charged with state level leadership can help. We can help in the traditional way that democratic collectivities ought to confront their common difficulties: through inquiry, through discussion, and through a commitment to act once the means for intelligent action become clear.

I am appalled at our lack of knowledge about the problems and potential of teaching in the community college. We pride ourselves as being institutions committed to teaching and yet we study that fundamental process not at all. There is an enormous interpersonal distance between those who sit in the Legislature and on policy making boards, on the one hand, and the faculty on the other. The evidence of that distance is recorded in every district where faculty members find their best hope in organizing and bargaining collectively. What can be done to deepen our understanding of the teaching function in our colleges and to elevate respect for the act of teaching? Here are three suggestions:

1. There must be better means for faculty to communicate their experiences, their problems and their ideas to their colleagues, to policy makers and to the public. There should be encouragement for faculty members to commit their perceptions and ideas to paper, perhaps with modest financial awards as an incentive. These faculty essays should be disseminated, perhaps in the form of a new statewide journal dedicated to community college teaching so that a forum for all 104 colleges can be established. The best of these essays should be provided to publications of general circulation so that the audience can be enlarged and public understanding enhanced. There should be a means for faculty members with

questions or ideas to visit other campuses. This process of communication and knowledge sharing should be managed by faculty. The recently enacted AB 1173, sponsored by the Board of Governors and ably managed in the Legislature by Assemblyman John Vasconcellos, is one vehicle for faculty organizations to act upon these ideas. I hope that the Academic Senates, and other faculty organizations at both the local and state levels, will seize the opportunity to seek funds for these purposes.

2. There should be an independent inquiry, funded from state sources, into teaching in the community colleges. The general topics would include: What sorts of people constitute our faculties? Where have they come from and where are they headed professionally? What are the conditions for teaching and how do faculty members spend their time? What are the current perceptions of trustees, administrators, faculty and students concerning the status of teaching in our colleges and how it could be improved? In my own view, such a study must go beyond mail questionnaires. It must involve interviews and informal sessions where people on a sample of campuses have a chance to talk and to bounce ideas off of one another. Further, the study should examine specific policy matters: What is the potential role of sabbaticals in improving teaching and how might they be financed? What can be learned from the experience of Teacher Centers now operating in the K-12 sector? What is the potential for shifting from an evaluation of teaching done by administrators to a system of peer evaluation or a mixed system? How should in-service training and professional development be organized? What changes might be possible in the structure of campus governance to bring teaching concerns more to the fore of local decision making? This study must not be conducted upon faculty, but with faculty. Representatives of statewide faculty organizations should play

a key role in a steering committee to guide this work.

3. Policy makers must commit themselves to a serious interest in teaching. Let that commitment start with the state Board of Governors. As a Board we should carve out some of the time we now devote to passing resolutions, approving allocation, enforcing regulations and advocating legislation, to stop and listen to what is happening on campuses, with special emphasis upon teaching concerns. We should give up a few of our meetings in sterile airport hotels and get onto the campuses, not as a 15 member board but in groups of two and three. We should organize panels and invite a few legislators, trustees, student leaders and top officials of statewide faculty and administrator groups to sit with us in public and private consultations with the faculty. This effort will take time and organization. We will not discover just one faculty voice, but many. But we must educate ourselves. The Board of Governors can assume a position of leadership on questions of teaching without invading local control. We have an obligation to raise the right issues and, where we can see the right path, advocate a redirection of state staff energy, changes in regulations and alterations of law that will once again make good teaching the keystone of community college life.

In all this, we must talk to one another as we have never talked before; we must trust each other as we have never trusted each other before; we must work together as we have never worked before. Neither the organized community college faculty of this state nor the Board of Governors is meeting its proper obligation to the most important aspect of college life. Let us renew our commitments and, in the process, insure that both "community" and "college" remain a vital part of the community colleges that California has built at a dear cost and with great hopes.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
1238 S STREET
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814

April 21, 1978

To: Board of Governors

From: Steve Weiner

In the past several months I have had several conversations with people who care about our work as a Board. In gereral, I find that respect for our efforts is growing. However, there are three problems that merit attention:

1. There is concern that the Board is too isolated from the reality of the campuses. Ceremonial tours, even when we meet on campus, do not provide us with a clear sense of the problems experienccd by trustees, faculty, administrators and students.

2. There is concern that the Board spends almost all of its time on issues that are only peripheral to the teaching and learning process. As a state Board, there are good reasons why we should spend a good deal of time worrying about legislation, allocations and regulations. But we seem to have no time left for educational matters.

3. There is concern that the Board only sporadically displays leadership on issues as distinguished from reacting to the agendas of others. (Admittedly, as in part-time employment or vocational education, there are exceptions where several Board members have exercised initiative.)

All three concerns have some merit and are related to one another. In the attached remarks to the Academic Senate, I tried to outline some ideas about how the Board might exercise some leadership on the question of teaching. The specific suggestions (which can be found in the final pages) will be brought to the next meeting of the Executive Committee. However, if you have the time, then I would appreciate your informal reactions at our next Board meeting in Sacramento.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

JUN 2 3 1978

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES